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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000126

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [EZ](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: CZECH REQUEST FOR USG TRANSPORT OF ARMORED
VEHICLES TO BAGHDAD

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Michael Dodman for reason 1
.4 b+d

[1](#)1. (U) Action request in para 5.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: The Czech government requests USG assistance in transporting two armored vehicles to Baghdad. The vehicles will be used by protective forces guarding the Czech ambassador and other Czech diplomats in Baghdad. The Czechs are prepared to cover some of the cost.

[1](#)3. (C) The Czech government request was made initially on December 14 when Minister of Interior Frantisek Bublan raised the issue with visiting Attorney General Ashcroft. Representatives of the Czech MFA and Interior Ministry asked to meet with Polec Counselor Jan 26 to provide additional details. Miroslav Kosek of the MFA's Security Department and Colonel Libor Lochman, Director of the Czech Police's Rapid Response Unit, provided the following information:

-- The Czech embassy in Baghdad currently operates with an Ambassador (Martin Klepetko), three diplomats, several support staff, and 11 guards from the Rapid Response Unit (URNA).

-- The embassy currently has three armored vehicles: two have "level 4" armor and one has "level 6" armor. The GOCR believes that in the current security environment the lesser armored vehicles are not sufficient. They propose to swap two new Toyota Land Cruisers fitted with level 6 armor for the two level 4 vehicles.

-- There was a second level 6 armored vehicle in Baghdad. This was attacked on September 1, 2004, on the street close to the Czech embassy. Thirty bullets hit the vehicle. The ambassador was not in the vehicle at the time. The two URNA guards in the vehicle survived, but the GOCR is certain that they would not have survived had they been in a vehicle with level 4 armor. That vehicle has since been returned to Prague for refurbishment.

-- The Czechs do not have the equipment to fly the vehicles to Baghdad themselves. The alternative to airlift, according to the GOCR, is overland travel from Amman. GOCR officials have rejected this given security risks: they referenced a recent attack on German guards bringing in vehicles along this route that resulted in the death of two guards.

-- Col Lochman said he had heard from his Portuguese counterpart that they were able to get new vehicles to Baghdad for their embassy on a U.S. military cargo flight that originated in Spain. They request a similar arrangement: the Czechs are prepared to get their vehicles to Germany or another departure point and seek a lift into Baghdad on a U.S. flight. According to Mr. Kosek, the GOCR hopes this transported could be provided to the Czechs, as a coalition partner, at no charge. But the GOCR is prepared to discuss reimbursement, if required. Finally, the GOCR would also like to discuss the possibility of their two level 4 armored vehicles returning to Europe on a U.S. aircraft.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: The Czechs have just extended the deployment of their 98-man military police unit in southern Iraq through the end of 2005 (septel follows on today's Senate approval); they also have a ten-man Army surgical team in Iraq through [1](#)2005. The government and Czech NGOs are carrying out numerous projects to support civil society: training police and judges, helping to protect cultural heritage, and funding educational material in advance of the election on democracy and tolerance. They are a committed, albeit relatively small, member of the coalition. The September 2004 attack on the Czech Ambassador's car has understandably heightened their concern about security in Baghdad, but they have kept their embassy functioning and adequately staffed. Their embassy facilitates much of the Czech assistance in Iraq, and serves as a symbol of continued Czech commitment to the Iraqi people. We encourage Washington agencies to give the Czech request full and favorable consideration.

[1](#)5. (U) Action request: Embassy requests USG response to GOCR request, or designated point-of-contact with whom Czechs can discuss further details.

CABANISS